

**MASTER ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (MEA) INVENTORY****Questions Asked:**

1. Cost and length of time to prepare document?
2. For what type of projects/decisions was the document used?
3. For what length of time would the document be valid before it needs to be updated?

**CITY Called/Responses:****1. City of Santa Monica, Planning Department**

Contacts: Sarah Legeune, Kim Christianson: 310-458-8341

Population: 85,686

City land area; 3,964 acre (6 square miles)

The City of Santa Monica prepared an MEA in the mid-1980's and has updated it four times since. The primary purpose of the MEA was as a baseline document. The positive aspect of this was that all CEQA documents prepared by outside consultants/applicants used the same background information. The biggest problem with the MEA is that once completed, it was "almost instantly out of date." They have had several lawsuits due to the fact that the MEA information used for CEQA documents was outdated; e.g., two- to three-year-old traffic counts used for initial studies where the counts and level of service (LOS) ratings may have changed.

Due to its short life, Ms. Christianson strongly recommends that if MEA preparation is pursued, staff and/or funds should be fully allocated towards it. The Santa Monica City Council directed staff toward other priorities during preparation of their MEA. Because of this, much of the existing conditions research work had to be performed multiple times.

Neither of the Santa Monica planners contacted could estimate the original (1980's version) cost of the MEA preparation. They had been involved with updates, however. According to Ms. Christianson, the cost of the most recent update was approximately \$100,000. She said that the consensus among their staff and Council is that the document should be updated every couple of years if it is to be useful. Santa Monica is currently reconsidering whether or not to continue revising their MEA due to the costs and problems associated with it.

## **2. City of Chico, Planning Department**

Contact: Tom Hayes: 530-895-4853

Population: 100,000

The City of Chico had a consultant prepare an MEA in 1994 for approximately \$60,000. It took less than a year and there was no public review. This document was used for their General Plan Update and as the environmental setting for their Master Environmental Impact Report. Their GP requires updating every 5 years so the MEA was updated by one staff member and intern in 1999.

## **3. City of Santa Rosa, Planning Department**

Contact: Frank Kasimov: 707-543-3265; ext. 3258

Population of Santa Rosa: 152,000; SW Santa Rosa: 40,000

An MEA was prepared in 1994 for the Southwest Santa Rosa Area Plan (like a Specific Plan); it was used as a basis for their Master EIR with a 20 year horizon. It was a compilation of infrastructure, schools, land use, parks, etc. It was not updated since an MEIR was used for subsequent projects.

They also did an MEA for the Southeast Santa Rosa Area Plan but subsequently did a Program EIR instead.

## **4. City of Tehachapi**

Contact: Dave James: 661-822-2200; ext. 107

Population: 6,000

An MEA was prepared in-house in 2000 for an approximate cost of \$10,000. The preparation took about 2 months. It was done for the “Tehachapi Crossing Commercial Center” project. The size was approximately 50 acres. It showed all the land uses, building footprints, infrastructure, traffic, and environmental resources (biology, archaeology, etc.) This information was used as a baseline when other projects were submitted for the site. Architectural standards were also incorporated. Information for the MEA was gathered from recent environmental documents prepared by CalTrans.

## **5. City of Wasco, Planning Department**

Contact: Dennis McNamara: 661-758-7210

Population: 20,092

City land area: about 5,000 acres (8 sq. miles)

The City of Wasco prepared an MEA in 1990. The document was used for CEQA analysis, most notably for initial studies, and included not only background/existing conditions information but significance thresholds and mitigation measures as well. The MEA was never updated and has since been replaced by a Master EIR.

